In regard to House Bill 4554, which seeks to amend 1994 PA 451, by adding section 6/25/2007 12:50 PM
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In regard to House Bill 4554, which seeks to amend 1994 PA 451, by adding section 40113c:
"The people of the state of Michigan Enact: Sec. 40113C. Neither the department nor the commission shall prohibit the use of a smokeless powder rifle to take game in the circumstances in which a black powder rifle may be used to take game."

I would like to express my support for passage of this bill.

Introduction:
My name is Mark Buckley. I've been hunting since I was a kid - started rabbit, squirrel and pheasant hunting with my dad, and continued into deer hunting. I deer hunt for the full 3 months that the state generously affords me - October through December; Archery, general firearms, and muzzleloader seasons. For the past 3 years, during general firearms season, I've hunted almost exclusively with a muzzleloader. I reload for all of the centerfire rifles and handguns that I own. I enjoy shooting and working on the technical aspects of hunting, which is probably what drew me to muzzleloaders - where one can spend an infinite amount of time fine-tuning and tinkering. Currently, Michigan law allows the use of black powder and black powder substitutes for muzzleloader hunting during muzzleloader season. Smokeless powder may be used in muzzleloader hunting during the general firearms season.

What does smokeless powder mean to muzzleloader hunting in Michigan today?

It may be necessary to establish the difference between the types of powders commonly used for muzzleloading today. Current law allows the use of black powder, or a black powder substitute. The original black powder is composed of 3 organic substances - potassium nitrate (saltpeter), charcoal, and sulfur. Commonly used black powder substitutes such as Pyrodex and Triple 777 (both sold by Hodgdon Powder Company), as well as Black Mag 3 (made by MagKor), and American Pioneer and Goex Pinnacle, bear no chemical resemblance to black powder. In fact, the black powder substitutes really bear no resemblance to each other - each differs in chemical composition, sometimes drastically (though they all lack sulfur, giving higher velocities by weight, and proving somewhat less corrosive). Try as I might, I can find no definition on the books, chemical composition or otherwise, that defines what a black powder substitute is. The only common similarities between them all is that they all produce varying degrees of smoke, and all can be volumetrically measured with old black powder powder measures. That does not mean to infer that they are equivalent to black powder - in fact, when measured volumetrically, black powder substitutes are generally 15-20% more efficient than black powder.
What's commonly referred to as "smokeless" powder today is nitrocellulose based powder. What's the difference between smokeless powder and black powder (or black powder substitutes)? Black powder is exceptionally easy to ignite, and is classified by the DOT as an explosive, because it doesn't need to be confined to destructive (it can't even be stored on a retailer shelf - retailers must store it in an approved, locked container). Black powder substitutes and smokeless powders are all classified by the DOT as propellants, and require far greater ignition temperatures. Unlike explosives, propellants need to be tightly sealed and confined to produce pressure that would destroy its surroundings.
Both black powder and black powder substitutes are very hygroscopic - that is - they have a high tendency to absorb moisture from the air. When these powders absorb moisture, the powder burns slower. Smokeless powder is not hygroscopic in nature, a nice benefit of nitrated cellulose. Black powder and black powder subs are relatively inefficient - leaving up to 50% of its weight unburnt, which is of course, why it smokes. The unburnt powder is very corrosive, and would render the firearm useless in short order if not cleaned promptly. Smokeless powder burns very efficiently, leaving very little fouling in the barrel, and what little is left doesn't have the corrosive properties of black powder.

There seems to be two primary concerns that arise when discussing smokeless powder muzzleloading: Safety and Extended Range. I'd like to briefly address those concerns, along with a few additional points.
- Safety. Some would argue that smokeless powder is unsafe to use in muzzleloaders, creating too much pressure. This is a misunderstanding. Smokeless powder is much more efficient than black powder and black powder substitutes, which means much less powder is necessary. During muzzleloading season, I shoot a 250 grain bullet, using 100 grains of Triple 7 powder (BPS). During general firearms season, I use the same 250 grain bullet, with 42 grains of Accurate Arms 5744 powder(Nitrocellulose). These loads have both been shot over the chronograph, and ballistically, perform equally. Nevertheless, hunters should only use powder and components recommended in the manual provided by their firearms' manufacturer. Hunters encounter this restriction in every facet of firearms and reloading - muzzleloading is no different. Its not plausible to suggest that because smokeless powder becomes legal,

BP SUB IN SMOKELESS

HUNTIN's

that hunters would begin using it in firearms not rated for its use. I've never filled my tank with diesel, though the pump resides right next to the gasoline, and it would be completely legal for me to do.

I'd argue that, when using firearms rated for smokeless powder, ~~its~~ safer. Smokeless powder doesn't produce a cloud of poisonous gas. As mentioned previously, its not hygroscopic, and mis-fires and hang-fires are virtually non-existant. (Hang fires are really misfires - in which the powder is partially ignited but doesn't burn fast, and eventually fires after some delay. I have a friend who was bear hunting with black powder. While attempting to shoot at a bear, he pulled the trigger, and nothing happened. He waited a few moments with the gun aimed and at his shoulder. Still nothing. He then dis-mounted the gun, and began to examine the hammer, to see if the primer went off. At this point, the gun fired. Fortunately, no one was hurt.) Because of its high flash point, smokeless powder is far safer to transport and store.

HOW DOES IT CHANGE THE RATE OF FIRE

- The other most common misconception is that somehow, by using smokeless powder, hunters will be able to greatly extend their range making it comparable to other centerfire hunting rifles. This is wrong on two accounts. First - a 50 caliber bullet can only be made to go so far - no matter what type of powder is pushing it. The laws of physics dictate this. A muzzleloader will always have roughly half the range of say, a 30-06. Secondly - smokeless powder does not push the bullet any faster than black powder or black powder subs can. It simply does it with less powder. I have a Savage 10MLII, and a Thompson Center Omega muzzleloader. Savage's published loads do not exceed 2300 fps from the muzzle, using smokeless powder. TC and Knight muzzleloaders both publish loads meeting or exceeding these velocities in their manuals, using black powder substitutes such as Pyrodex and Triple 7. Knight just released their new "long range" hunter model, that guarantees accuracy at 200 yards using Triple 7. Michigan's own "Ultimate Firearms", maker of the BP Express muzzleloader, is rated to use 200 grains of Triple 7, and touts 2400 fps. "Put 'em in a pile at a quarter mile" is the slogan on their web page, and have confirmed kills in excess of 500 yards.

Beyond these issues, there's a few other points I'd like to make. Smokeless powder is far cheaper to shoot - since you shoot so much less powder per shot. I can buy a pound of Triple 7 for $25 and get 70, 100 grain shots, or a pound of AA5744 for $22, and get ~~140~~ 42 grain shots. Since recoil is a product of charge weight and bullet weight, smokeless powder recoils much less than black powder or black powder subs. The cleanliness of smokeless powder cannot be over-stated - especially in today's world.

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burden of CO's in law enforcement

cost to shoot / practice

herd management

CONVENIENCE GETS HUNTER IN FIELD

CHAMBER PRESSURES

STICK BOWS